

Missing Weapons

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Study Says Enough U.S. Arms To Outfit 8,000 Disappeared

Washington (AP) — A Pentagon study says enough weapons, ammunition and explosives disappeared from U.S. military bases around the world between 1971 and 1974 to outfit approximately 8,000 soldiers.

The report also raised the possibility that the outlawed Provisional wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and other terrorist groups may have received some of the stolen materials.

The report, prepared by the Army Physical Security Review Board and released Monday by Rep. Les Aspin, D-Wis., said approximately 6,800 weapons and 1.2 million rounds of small-arms ammunition or explosives were lost.

"The losses would equip approximately 10 combat battalions with a basic load of small arms and munitions," according to the report, which was turned over to then-Army Secretary Howard H. Callaway on March 10.

The report charged that "a confidential Naval Intelligence Service source alleged that military weapons had been stolen from Camp Lejeune, N.C., and shipped to the Provisional wing of the Irish Republican Army."

The report also said that one IRA contact allegedly was operating in the Ft. Bragg, N.C., area and that the IRA reportedly was trying to recruit U.S. Marines "who will qualify with machine guns or communications equipment."

An Army spokesman emphasized that while the report does discuss the possibility, it "does not state that the IRA is known to have

acquired any of the missing weapons or ammunition."

He noted that the study showed that 2,595 weapons and 540,000 munition items were recovered during the three-year period.

Most of the disappearances were attributable to theft from bases or losses during training exercises, the spokesman said.

Aspin, a frequent critic of the military, said the study was "particularly startling in its description of the problems of preventing terrorists, particularly overseas, from seizing U.S. weapons."

He cited other sections of the report which said that U.S. Army weapons were left behind by Japanese Red Army terrorists who took over the French embassy in the Hague, the Netherlands, for five days in 1973, and that "a self-styled member of the SLA (Symbionese Liberation Army) offered a soldier stationed at Ft. Jackson, S.C., substantial sums of money for stolen military weapons."

The report said ammunition losses remained fairly constant during the three years studied, but that weapons losses increased. Incidents of theft at National Guard facilities, for instance, more than doubled in 1974 from 1973.

The Army spokesman said 62 recommendations made in the report have been approved and should be completed by the end of the fiscal year 1980 at a projected cost of over \$100 million, excluding cost for the nuclear weapons security program.